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PEARL

A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY POEM

RENDERED INTO MODERN ENGLISH BY

G. G. COULTON,
M.A., Hon. D. Litt., Durham.

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INTRODUCTION

THE translator had hoped to revise and rewrite part of the text in this third edition and to add to the notes; but he has been hindered by other prior engagements, and has been obliged to content himself with adding to this Preface a brief dissertation on earlier child-elegies.

Professor Palgrave speaks of *Pearl* as " perhaps the most purely and ideally perfect specimen of our elder poetry which good fortune has left us " ; and few who have studied it carefully will dissent from his verdict. But the language of the poem is as much more difficult than Chaucer's, as Chaucer's is than Spenser's ; and even a willing student can scarcely read the original without much wearisome toil. The object of this little book is to supply the general reader with as close a version as possible in the metre of the original ; and to tempt some readers, perhaps, to study the difficult Middle English.[1]

Of the poet we know nothing but that he must almost certainly have been a contemporary of Chaucer, and the author of three other remarkable poems preserved in the same unique manuscript—*Cleanness*, *Patience*, and *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*.

[1] The few archaic words retained in this translation are explained in the Notes at the end of the book.

Internal evidence, and especially that of dialect, points pretty conclusively to Lancashire. It is of great interest to compare—or rather, perhaps, to contrast—this fourteenth-century poet with some of his predecessors, most of whom, at least, he never knew.

" The child is dead ! " a piteous theme in thought and harder still in fact ! Yet with a very true instinct, most poets refrain from stressing the story as its frequency and pathos might seem to demand. The three most poignant tragedies in the Old Testament are perhaps the briefest : the sun-stricken boy crying to his father, " My head, my head ! " the short-lived child of sin, " I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me " ; and the blood-stained rebel of whom the King still thought as a child : " Would God that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son ! " The Laureate's *Perfect Little Body* is among the briefest, as it is among the most beautiful of elegies ; and, long before him, Herrick twice outdid himself in brevity when he came to write of a dead child :

" Here a pretty baby lies,
Sung asleep with lullabies :
Pray be silent and not stir
Th' easy earth that covers her."

Almost from Herrick's time, again, we find that still briefer epitaph in Westminster cloisters, which moves us more deeply than the thought of all the buried kings and queens :

" Jane Lister,
Dear Childe."

Pagan Greeks and Romans treated the theme with

antique simplicity. Tibullus is startlingly modern when he appeals to his mistress in the name of her pet sister and the child's tragic death (ii, 6); of Martial's three epigrams on the five-year-old girl Erotion two at least breathe deep and tender feeling (v, 35, 37; x, 61). Some of the Greek epigrammatists chose similar themes; most illuminating, perhaps, are the actual inscriptions found here and there on surviving tombstones. The child sometimes speaks its own epitaph. A boy killed at play tells his sad story in detail and excuses his playmate; but the usual inscription is briefer and more general: "Here I rest, a babe too young to know whether I did well or ill to die"; "If thou hadst ever seen me, O thou that passest by, or if thou couldst know how I died, thou wouldst water these bones with thy tears"; "Insatiable Hades, wherefore must thou hasten to snatch my unripe infancy? sooner or later are we not all due unto thee?" In most cases, however, it is the parents who speak; and, if they moralize, it is upon the blindness or the wilful irony of Fate. The briefest and saddest tale that man can tell is when he outlives his own boy:

"Nil brevius pote nec gravius: superante parente
Hic jacet æterna filius in requie."

"Most miserable of women! whom Fate should rightly have taken, but mine own son hath prevented me"; or again, "It was I, your wretched mother, who should first have died." The tributes to the dead are direct and simple: "Ursa, who lived thirteen years, five months and five days; a girl of all goodness"—*virgo totius bonitatis.*

" Our hope was in the child ; now it is turned into ashes and mourning." Of two twins, children to a singing-woman, " No dance or song could lengthen those brief lives." Here and there the complaint is untranslatable in its passionate *égoïsme à deux*. A boy of fifteen : " Quod si vixisset melius fuisset. Apuleia plorans mæstissima mater fecit." Another tomb echoes almost the same throb of intolerable anguish which beats in David's reiterated cry : " Reliquisti Mammam tuam gementem, plangentem, plorantem ; destituisti, Vitilla mea, miseram Mammam tuam." Constantly, the parent breathes tender solicitude for the tomb : " May he live many years who, passing this sod, shall pray that it may lie lightly on the child." For burial then was often in garden or field ; let us, therefore, do all we can to keep our frail memorial from desecration. " Lest our children perish unknown in the earth, even as their names have perished, this little tombstone speaketh unto thee " ; " Whosoever shall hurt this buried child, even so may he himself fare, and all his kindred ! " " Let no man trouble us as we lie here ; whosoever thou art, hail now and farewell ; " so speaks a mother with her " innocent babe " of four. A faithful pædagogus has marked his pupil's grave for his own : " Dear child, this is thine abode and mine ; here is our last home ; here shall we keep side by side ; thus have I ordered, who now survive thee."

" Here is our last home " ; " here lies the boy in everlasting sleep " ; " thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master." A few generations pass, and we find a different

spirit. Philosophers, says Gibbon, had vainly commended the doctrine of immortality to the multitude; but the "inflexible and intolerant zeal" of the Christians seized upon it, and Tertullian boasted that an artisan could now answer those doubts which had beset the wisest pagan minds. Doubtless the boast was narrow and premature; but at least it testified to one thing; from that time forth, the world must seriously face the great question:

> "Une immense espérance a traversé la terre:
> Malgré nous vers le ciel il faut lever les yeux."

The mediæval consensus as to future life was not quite so unanimous as is sometimes supposed; but the overwhelming majority of educated men would have given a fairly unanimous answer. Yet, in that answer, de Musset's *immense espérance* was strangely mingled with despair. Death, in the twinkling of an eye, decides between eternal bliss and everlasting torment; and a treatise attributed to St. Bonaventura echoed the general feeling, at least from St. Augustine onwards, in warning us how small the happier chances are—*damnatorum multitudinem, salvandorum paucitatem.* And for the unbaptized infant there is no happier chance at all. No later Puritanism was more severely repellent here than the deliberate and unanimous verdict of the mediæval Church. Dante-commentators may assure us that the infants in his *Inferno* suffer nothing worse than the consciousness of separation from God's presence; but we find the most orthodox theologians counting this separation from God, logically enough, among the worst torments of the damned.

A Catholic mother had no right to pray for her unbaptized child; nay, by a refinement of logical cruelty, part of her own bliss in heaven was to consist in the contemplation of others—her own not excepted—in hell; so far have theological dialectics gone to obliterate that evangelical word: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." We cannot doubt that mothers, in their inmost hearts, either ignored or rebelled against this. The true woman, in the last resort, would rather have renounced all heaven for herself than for the suffering child of her own pains:

"But I wept like a child that day; for the babe had fought for his life; . . .
I wept like a child, for the child that was dead before he was born."

Lamentably few, however, are the women's voices that come to us directly from the Middle Ages; we know a little of men's passionate revolts against the cruelties which too conscientious Churchmen attributed to God, but we can only guess at that which most thoughtful women felt. And, though child-monuments have survived here and there from those times, there are few or no epitaphs which we can compare with the pagan's heartfelt cry. On the other hand, the fourteenth century has given us two of the most elaborate child-elegies in all literature; Boccaccio's Latin poem on his daughter Violante, and this poem, fundamentally original even if we admit the inspiration of Boccaccio, which we call *The Pearl*. Here, however, we are on different ground. The child in these cases had been baptized; she had died too young for mortal sin, and the poet could dilate without afterthought on the

glories of Paradise; here is a hope which breathes too seldom from the pagan tomb.

The most detailed discussions of this poem known to me are in two essays by Dr. Carleton Brown and Professor W. H. Schofield in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. xix. pt. i. (1904). Those scholars have traced the most important of the author's literary debts to Boethius, to the so-called Sir John Mandeville, and possibly to the fourteenth eclogue of Boccaccio. His heaviest debt of all, to the Bible, will at once be obvious to all readers; and those who are interested in mediæval theology should not fail to read Dr. Brown's admirable remarks on this head. Dante students will notice at once how the author of *Pearl*, in spite of many similarities of treatment, differs widely from the great Florentine in attributing equal glory to all the Blessed in Heaven. But Dr. Brown, I believe, has been the first to point out how definitely the Englishman here breaks away from the traditional patristic view, and how thoroughly this agrees with his general religious attitude—"evangelical rather than ecclesiastical." In this he is at one with Chaucer (so far as Chaucer deals seriously with religion), with the author of *Piers Plowman*, with the contemporary mystics of the Upper Rhine, and with the earlier stages of Wycliffism, before that movement entered upon its phase of definite revolt. Of revolt there is no trace in *Pearl*: but Dr. Brown rightly observes that the author insists especially upon doctrines which are as definitely Protestant as Roman Catholic, to the almost

total exclusion of those points which divided the two Churches at the Reformation.[1]

But it is mainly as literature that I bring this poem before the general public; as the sincere cry of a father's heart at the grave of his infant girl. There are few more powerful pictures in any language of sorrow and love, despair and reconciliation. His child had died before the end of her second year. Mourning one day in the "arbour"[2] under which her little bones are laid, he falls asleep, and sees in his dream the glorified spirit of his lost daughter. One by one she silences from Scripture all his rebellious thoughts and doubts, scarcely less peremptorily than Beatrice silenced those of Dante. By slow degrees his despair gives place to resignation; and the poem ends with a stanza which has all the mysterious solemnity of a cathedral aisle. We may be painfully conscious of the superstitions and abuses that seem almost inseparable from the later mediæval conception of the Mass; and yet those last five lines of *Pearl* will haunt us with the undying charm of the sister picture from *In Memoriam*—

> ". . . where the kneeling hamlet drains
> The chalice of the grapes of God."

[1] Professor Schofield argues that the poem is a pure allegory rather than a personal story; but he ignores many expressions which directly contradict his theory; while even the evidence which he adduces tells heavily against it on more than one point. Moreover, he betrays a fatal unfamiliarity with one important side of mediæval life, ignoring the difference between the priesthood and those minor orders which frequently left the cleric free to marry. Dr. Brown (p. 126) falls into the same mistake, but with less damage to his argument. I have defended the personal nature of the poem in a paper contributed to the *Modern Language Review* for October, 1906.

[2] i.e. "herbarium," the "herber" of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, l. 203. The word was first used of any grassy spot, but gradually acquired the special sense of an artificially sheltered corner in a garden.

PEARL

PEARL

1 PEARL, pleasant to prince's pay,
So daintily dight in gold so clear!
From orient lands, I hardily say,
Was never seen a gem her peer;
So round, so comely every way,
So small, so smooth her sidës were,
Wherever I judged of gems so gay,
I set her single and singular.
Alas! in an arbour I lost my dear,
She slid through the grass into earth away:
Now pine I despoilèd of love's sweet cheer—
Of that spotless Pearl that was mine one day.

2 Since in that spot from me she sprang,
Oft have I waited there, wanting my weal,
That once was wont to soothe all wrong,
And to lighten my lot, and to bring me heal.
Now pierceth my heart the bitter pang,
Swelleth my breast with the sorrow I feel!
Yet never methinks was so sweet a song,
As in that still hour to my soul doth steal!
But alas! for my sense must stagger and reel
To think of her comeliness clad in clay.
O Earth! thou hast set thy sordid seal
On that spotless Pearl that was mine one day!

3 Needs must spices from that spot spread
Where such riches to rot is run:
Blossoms white and blue and red
Glow there in glory against the sun:
There may flower and fruit never fade,
Where down she slid into earth so dun;
For the blade cannot grow till its grain is dead—
No wheat were else to the garner won.
From good each good is ever begun,
So seemly a seed can never decay;
Sweet flowers shall daily spread to the sun
From that spotless Pearl that was mine one day.

4 To that sweet spot of sad renown
I entered, to that arbour green,
In August, at a high season,
When corn is cut with sickles keen.
The earth where once my Pearl rolled down
Was shadowed with herbs full clear and sheen,
Gillyflower, ginger and gromelion,
And peonies powdered all between.
But, fair and seemly as was that scene,
Fairer the fragrance that floated away
From the dwelling where gloweth in glory, I ween,
That spotless Pearl that was mine one day.

5 In that sad spot my hands I wrung
For care full cold my breast that bound.
Dinned in my brain a doleful song,
Tho' reason soothed the rankling wound.
I wept, with wayward wits unstrung,
My Pearl that here lay underground :
Though Christ's own lore sweet comfort sung,
My wretched will to woe was bound.
I fell upon that flowery ground ;
Such drowsy scents my soul did sway,
I slid into a sleeping-swound
Of that precious Pearl that was mine one day.

6 Thence sprang my spirit forth in space,
While my body lay in earth-bound dream :
My ghost is gone in Goddës grace
To venture where strange marvels teem :
I wist not where in the world it was,
But I found myself where steep cliffs gleam ;
Towards a forest I bent my face,
Where rocks so radiant rich were seen
No eye might bear their dazzling beam,
Or the gleaming glory that from them glent.
No blazon'd tapestry e'er did seem
So fair as this sight that God me sent.

7 High crown'd is all that steep hillside
With crystal cliffs so steep of kind !
Fair woods and holts about them bide
With stems as blue as blue of Ind,
And beams of burnished silver slide
O'er trembling leaf and mossy rind.
When gleam of glades did o'er them glide,
With shimmering sheen full sharp they shined.
A gravel on the ground did grind
Of precious pearls of orient :
The sun's own sheen was pale and blind
Before that sight that God me sent.

8 The sight of that hillside so clear
Taught my sad soul all grief forget ;
Such flavours fresh of fruits there were,
The thought thereof doth stay me yet ;
Fowls fluttered fearless here and there,
Of flaming hues, both small and great.
No zithern-string or dulcimer
Could half their jocund mirth repeat :
For, when those birds their bright wings beat,
They sang with such a sweet consent,
So gracious glee could no man get
As this sweet sight that God me sent.

9 All was so dight in dainty guise,
This forest land where fate me set,
No mortal tongue might e'er devise
The beauteous sights mine eye that met ;
I wander forth in blissful wise,
No bank so big to daunt me yet ;
The farther in, the fairer rise
Fresh herb and fruit and floweret :
Rich fields, with paths and hedgerows set ;
Rough banks, as fretted gold that brent
On either side the rivulet—
Such was the sight that God me sent.

10 The glamour of that glorious deep
Was banks beset with beryls bright,
Whereby the sweet waves swirl and sweep,
With gentle murmur flowing aright ;
Down in the depths lay stones an heap,
As painted windows glow with light,
Or as twinkling stars, when the weary sleep,
Stare from the welkin on winter night ;
For every pebble that met my sight
Was meet for royal ornament,
And all the water was alight
With this sweet sight that God me sent.

11 This glorious sight of down and dale,
Of water, wood, and noble plain,
Stirred in me bliss, allayed my bale,
Soothed my distress, destroyed my pain ;
Beside those waves that softly steal
I went in bliss, with teeming brain ;
The farther I followed that watery vale,
The mightier joy did my heart constrain,
As fortune fares when she is fain,
Send she solace or sadness sore,
The wight on whom her gifts may rain
Must chance to receive aye more and more.

12 More of weal was in that wise
Than I could tell, though I leisure had :
For earthly heart might not suffice
To grasp one tenth of that bliss so glad.
I seemed to see sweet Paradise
Beyond those banks in verdure clad :
That brook drew many a quaint device
Of waters through the golden glade ;
Beyond, beneath the slanting shade,
I hoped to win the farther shore ;
But the water was deep ; I dared not wade,
Though ever it charmed me more and more.

13 More and more, with anxious care,
I yearned to see that brook beyond ;
For if 'twas lovely where I could fare,
Far lovelier was that farther land.
I stayed my steps around to stare,
In eager hope some ford to have found ;
But perils more ywis there were,
The farther I stalkèd by the strand.
Yet never was I so unmann'd
To turn away from that rich store
Of fresh delights, so close at hand,
That moved my mind aye more and more.

14 More marvels now my soul beguiled ;
I saw, beyond that merry mere,
Bright crystal cliffs on bright cliffs piled,
Radiant with rays that have no peer :
At which cliff's foot there sat a child,
A gracious maid, full debonnair :
Her dazzling robe was undefiled ;
I knew her well, I had seen her ere.
As glistening gold, pure and sincere,
So shone she on that shining shore :
Long gazed I eagerly on her there ;
The longer, I knew her more and more.

15 The more I gazed on her fair face,
And saw her make so sweet a show,
The more I felt such gladdening grace
As seldom had been mine ere now.
I yearned to call her, but, alas !
Amazement dealt my heart a blow
To see her in so strange a place,
And made my reason bend and bow.
When lo ! she raised her ivory brow,
That such a look of sweetness wore,
As stung my heart with numbing woe,
And ever the longer the more and more.

16 More than my yearning my dread arose,
I bode stock still and dared not call,
With eyes wide open and mouth full close,
I stood as tame as hawk in hall.
Ghostly methinks was that purpose,
Yet I feared lest it might at last befall
That the prize might escape me which there I chose
Ere I could make it mine withal—
That gracious prize so free from gall,
So smooth, so slender, so seemly slight,
Rising up in array royal
A precious Piece with pearls bedight.

17 Choicest pearls of royal price,
There might man by grace have seen,
While, fair and fresh as fleur-de-lys,
She wandered down that limpid stream ;
All glistening white her tunic is,
Open at sides, and bound between
With marguerites, I well devise,
Of purest ray and most serene ;
Her sleeves were loose and large, I ween,
Inwrought with double gems so white ;
Her kirtle was of self-suit sheen,
With precious pearls around bedight.

18 A subtle crown yet wore that girl
Of marguerites and no other stone,
High pinnacled with clear white pearl,
With fretted flowerets thereon ;
Nought else upon her hair's fair curl,
Which hung in locks her neck adown :
Her look was grave as duke or earl,
Her hue more white than walrus-bone,
As gold refined her tresses shone,
That on her shoulders lay loose and light ;
Their deep colour yet needed none
Of the precious pearls that her robe bedight.

19 Bedight and broidered was each hem,
At hands, at sides, at overture,
With white pearl and none other gem ;
And burnished white was her vesture.
But a wondrous pearl withouten wem
In her mid breast was set so sure,
No stone in royal diadem
In price with that jewel might measure.
Methinks no tongue might e'er endure
To tell the glory of that sight,
So was it bright and clear and pure,
That precious pearl that her breast bedight !

20 Bedight with pearls, that precious Piece
Beyond the stream came down the shore ;
No gladder man was 'twixt here and Greece
Than I, when she came me before ;
She was nearer to me than aunt or niece,
And therefore was my joy the more.
Then that rare maiden proffered me speech ;
Inclining woman-like me before,
She doffed her crown of rich tresore
And hailed me with a voice so light,
Well was me that I ever was bore
To answer that Sweet, with pearls bedight.

21 " O Pearl," quoth I, " with pearls bedight,
Art thou my Pearl that I have plained,
With yearnings through the long lone night
And bitter tears in secret rained !
Since earth received thee from my sight,
Pensive, forlorn, I am for-pained,
While thou art ever glad and bright
In Paradise, of strife unstrained.
What weird hath brought hither the gem of my heart,
And set me in dole and great danger ?
Since we two were sundered and set apart,
I have been a joyless jeweller."

22 That Jewel then, in gems arrayed,
Raised her sweet face with eyes so grey,
Set on her crown with pearls o'erlaid,
And soberly thus began to say :
" O Sir ! you have your tale misread,
To say your Pearl is all away :
She is safe in a coffer now," she said,
" Yea, in this garden gracious and gay,
Herein to dwell for ever and play ;
For sin nor mourning come never here ;
This were thy treasure-hold, by my fay,
If thou wert a gentle jeweller.

23 " But, jeweller gentle, if thou shouldst lose
Thy joy for a gem that thee was lief,
Methinks thou art set on a mad purpose,
And busied for short-lived matters and brief.
For that thou hast lost was but a rose
That flowered and faded, blossom and leaf.
But now 'tis a pearl of price, hid close
In a casket free from rust or grief.
Yet thou hast called thy fate a thief,
Which truly hath robbed thee of nought, I swear ;
Thou blamest the cure of thy mischief ;
Thou art no gentle jeweller."

24 A jewel to me was then this Guest,
And jewels rare each word she said ;
" Good sooth," quoth I, " my blissful-best,
My deep distress thou hast allay'd.
To be excused I make request ;
I deemed my Pearl was lost and dead :
But, now she is found, I will hold her fast,
And dwell with her ever in wild-wood shade,
And love the laws that my Lord hath made,
Who hath me brought to this bliss so near :
Were I but with thee in yonder glade,
I were a joyful jeweller."

25 " Jeweller ! " said my Pearl so pale,
" Why mock ye men, so mad ye be ?
Three words hast thou spoken in that one tale,
Random and redeless I doom all three.
Full light they weigh in reason's scale ;
Thy speech before thy wit did flee.
Thou say'st, thou deemest me in this dale
Because with eyen thou may'st me see :
Again, thou weenest to come to me
By passing beyond this water clear :
And thirdly, to dwell in this countrie :
That may no joyful jeweller.

26 " I hold the jeweller little to praise
That loveth too well that he seeth with eye ;
The man I blame as uncorteyse,
That thinketh our Lord would speak a lie,
Who surely swore your life to raise,
Though fate should do your flesh to die :
Ye take His words by wayward ways,
In loving nought but what ye spy ;
And that is a point of vainglory,
That ill may a righteous man beseem,
To trust no tale as true to try
But so far as his reason alone may deem.

27 " Deem now thyself if thou hast told
Such words as man to God should say !
Thou boasteth to dwell in this Heavenly Hold,
Where thou wert better humbly to pray,
And yet He might the boon withhold :
Again, thou would'st cross this waterway :
But first thy corse must lie full cold,
And grow compound with clod and clay ;
For in Eden-grove thy flesh went stray,
And dreary death must first redeem
Our father's fault on that far day,
Ere God o'er this river thy doom can deem."

28 " Doomest thou me," quoth I, " my Sweet,
To dolour again ? then am I undone !
One short-lived hour doth Fate me cheat
With her sweet sight who must soon be gone.
Why must I her both miss and meet ?
My precious Pearl doth make me moan,
And this bootless treasure must gar me greet,
When I with dolour shall lose it anon.
Now reck I never how lowly and lone
I wander, afar from the land of my dream,
Who have lost all part in this Pearl, mine own !
Nought now but endless woe can I deem."

29 " Thou deemest nought but dire distress,"
Then said that maid ; " why dost thou so ?
Oft may a man so weep for the less,
That for clamour of grief he shall lose the moe.
Thou oughtest better thyself to bless,
And praise aye God in weal and woe ;
For anger availeth thee not a cress.
Spurn not the yoke whereto thou must bow :
For, though thou dance as any doe,
Brandish and bray as a froward team,
Yet, since thou canst move neither to nor fro,
Thou must needs abide what He shall deem.

30 " Let God decree, let Him ordain ;
Not one foot from His way will He writhe.
Think not one mite from thy moaning to gain,
Though thou for sorrow be never blithe.
Stint from this strife ; let go complain,
And seek His bliss full swift and swithe.
Thy prayer may at last His pity obtain,
That mercy shall thy trespass shrive ;
His comfort may thy languor lithe,
And thy woe be wafted away as a dream.
Be thou marred or made, be thou rueful or blithe,
All lieth in Him and as He shall deem."

31 Then deemed I to that damosel :
" Forfend the wrath of my dear Lord !
What though my hasty speech rebel,
Yet is my heart with ruth remorde
As weltering water goeth from well :
I ever beseech His misericorde ;
Rebuke me never with words so fell,
Though I go astray from mine own adored ;
But grant me kindly your comforde,
Piteously thinking upon this,
Of care and me thou hast made accord
That once wert cause of all my bliss.

32 " My bliss, my bale, thou hast been both ;
But much the greater hath been my moan.
Since thou wast caught away, forsooth,
I never wist whither my Pearl was gone :
But now that I see her, no more am I loth,
For when we parted we were at one.
God forbid we be now wroth,
We meet so seldom by stick or by stone !
Courteous thy speech, yet am I undone,
Who am but dust and heaviness ;
But Christës mercy and Mary and John,
These are the ground of all my bliss.

33 " In bliss I see thee blithely blent,
While I am thus cast down by fate.
Thou takest thereon but little tent,
Though I have oft the things I hate ;
But now I am here in thy presente,
I would beseech without debate
To hear from thee, in sober assent,
What life thou leadest early and late.
For I am full glad that thine estate
Is worthy worship and weal, ywis :
This of my joy is the high gate,
This is the ground of all my bliss."

34 " Now bliss, good sir, may thee betide,"
Answered that child so bright and clear,
" And welcome here to walk or bide ;
For now thy speech to me is dear.
Masterful mood and lofty pride,
I tell thee, are hated full bitterly here.
My Master loveth not to chide,
For meek are all that dwell Him near ;
And when in His place thou shalt appear,
Be deep devout in all meekness ;
My Lord the Lamb loveth aye such cheer,
That is the ground of all my bliss.

35 " A blissful life, thou say'st, I lead,
Whereof thou fain would'st know the stage :
Thou mindest well, when thy Pearl was shed,
She was full young and tender of age ;
But my Lord the Lamb, through His Godhead,
He took myself to His marriage,
Crowned me queen when my soul He wed,
In length of days from age to age.
Yea, dowered with all His heritage
His beloved are ; I am wholly His ;
His praise, His price, His lofty stage
Are root and ground of all my bliss."

36 " Blest maid," quoth I, " may this be true ?
(Displease not if I speak error :)
Art thou the Queen of heavens blue,
To whom the world shall do honour ?
We believe in Mary, from whom grace grew,
That bare a bairn of virgin flower.
Who might the crown from her remue,
But one surpassing her favour ?
Yet she, she is so singular
We call her Phœnix of Araby,
That bird of form so sweet and pure,
Like to the Queen of Courtesy."

37 " Courteous Queen ! " said that child so bright,
Kneeling to ground with veiled face ;
" Matchless mother and fairest to sight,
Blessed beginner of every grace ! "
Then rose she up and stood upright,
And spake toward me in that place :
" Sir, many attain to God's own light ;
But no usurpers bide in this place :
All the heavens that Empress has,
And earth and hell are in her fee :
From her heritage yet will none her chase,
For she is Queen of Courtesy.

38 " The court of the kingdom of God Alive
Hath this virtue in itself being,
Each soul that may therein arrive
Of all the realm is queen or king ;
And never shall one another deprive.
But each is glad of the other's having,
And would that his crown were better by five,
If possible were their bettering.
But my Lady, of whom the Christ did spring,
Holdeth the rule over us full high,
And none are envious of that thing :
For she is Queen of Courtesy.

39 " By courtesy, as saith St. Paul,
All we are members of Jesu Christ ;
Leg and arm and trunk and poll
Pertain to the body full true and tryst ;
Right so is every Christian soul
A limb that doth in Him subsist ;
Then look thou bear no hate or gall
To mar thy members or be-twist.
Though jewels gleam on thy Finger or Wrist,
Doth thy Head then grudge those gems to see ?
So fare we all with love and list
To the King and Queen of Courtesy."

" Courtesy, maiden, I well believe
And charity great be you among ;
But (pardon if my speech doth grieve,)
Methinks thou speakest now full wrong.
Thyself in heaven too high dost heave,
To make thee a queen, that wert so young.
What more honour might he achieve
That had suffered in this world brave and strong,
And lived in penance his whole life long,
With bodily pain his bliss to buy ?
What glory more might to him belong,
Than be crowned by the King, in courtesy ?

" That courtesy is too free in deed,
If it be sooth that thou dost say ;
Not two brief years with us didst lead,
Too young to please thy God or pray,
Nor never knew'st thou Pater or Creed
And yet made queen on thy first day !
I may not trow it, so God me speed,
That He would deal so wrong a way.
Of countess, damosel, *par ma fay*,
'Twere fair in heaven to hold the state ;
Or e'en to be lady of less array ;
But a queen ! That is too dear a date."

42 " There is no date of His goodness,"
Said then to me that maiden white ;
" For all is truth that He doth trace,
Nor may He do nor think but right.
As Matthew telleth in your Mass,
In soothful gospel of God Almight,
From him thou may'st th' ensample guess,
For he likeneth it to heaven's delight.
My realm, He saith, is like on height
To a lord that had a rich estate ;
Of time of year the term was tight,
To labour vines was now the date.

43 " That date of year these servants knew :
The lord, full early up he rose
To sort his vine with workers due,
And some he found to his purpose.
Full soon to good accord they drew
For a penny a day ; and forth each goes
To wrythe and to work in labour true,
To prune and pare and bind full close.
At noon, again, the good lord chose
Others that idle in market sate.
' Why stand ye so idle ? ' he said to those :
' Hath this long day for you no date ? '

44 " ' Ere date of day are we hither come,'
(Thus they answered with one same thought ;)
' We have standen here since rose the sun
And no man biddeth us do right nought,'
' Go into my vine, do that ye can,'
(The master thus these servants taught.)
' Such hire shall ye have ere the day be run
As a righteous lord to his workmen ought.'
Then went they into the vine and wrought ;
And thus all day went the lord his gate,
And new men into his vine he brought,
Till day was well-nigh passèd date.

45 " At the date of day, at evensong,
One hour before the sun went down,
He saw there idle men full strong
And said to them with sober sound :
' Why stand ye so idle this whole day long ? '
' Our hire,' said they, ' is nowhere bound.'
' Go into my vine, ye yeomen young,
And work as ye may ere the sun be down.'
Soon the world became right brown,
The great sun sank, and the hour waxed late ;
To take their hire he made summoun ;
The weary day was past its date.

46 " The date of day the lord did know
And called to the Reeve : ' Let pay my meinie :
Give them the hire that I them owe ;
And further, that none may me repreny,
Set them all upon a row
And give to each alike one penny.
Begin at the last that standeth low
Till to the foremost thou atteny.'
And then the first began to pleny,
And said that they had travailed sore :
' These but one hour did strive and streny ;
Us think us ought to take full more.

47 " ' More have we served, us thinketh so,
That suffered all the long day's heat,
Than these that wrought not hourës two ;
Yet to us thou dost them counterfeit ! '
Said the lord to one that answered so :
' Friend, no wrong dost thou here get.
Take that is thine own and go :
Our bargain was at a penny set.
Why beginnest thou now to fret ?
Was not a penny thy hire of yore ?
No man may claim beyond his debt,
Why then should'st thou thus ask for more ? '

48 " ' More or less is my free gift
To do with mine own whatso me please :
Or else thine eye to evil is lift
Because I am good, and just my pleas.
Thus then,' quoth the lord, ' shall I make shift :
The last shall have he first release,
And the first be last, run he never so swift ;
For many be called, though few encrease.
Thus the poorest shall have his ease,
Though late he come and little his power ;
For, albeit his toil full early cease,
The mercy of God is much the more.'

49 "More have I of joy and bliss herein,
Of ladyship great and life's full bloom,
Than all the wives in the world might win,
Seeking their own by righteous doom.
Though night was nigh ere I could begin,
(So late was I to the vineyard come,)
First of them all my hire did I win,
And was paid outright the whole full sum.
Yet others had labour more burdensome,
Toiling and sweating from hour to hour,
Whose time of reward is not yet come—
Nor shall be, perchance, for a whole year more."

50 Then answered I in plainer speech :
" Methinks thy tale is unreasonable.
God doth His justice clearly teach,
Or Holy Writ is but a fable.
In Psalter a verse doth plainly preach
That speaketh a point determinable :
' Thou dealest his full deserts to each
Thou high King aye preterminable.'
Now, if one have stood the whole day stable,
And thou to payment come him before,
Then the less in work is to take more able ;
And ever the longer, the less the more."

51 " Of more or less in God's high realm,"
Quoth that sweet maid, " is no debate :
For there doth each receive the same,
Little be his deserving or great.
Whether the Lord deal honour or shame,
He keepeth truly no niggard estate,
But lavisheth gifts as water from dam,
Or as deep sea-waves that never abate.
Free are all that humbly wait
On Him that conquered sin below :
What tongue may tell their glory's weight ?
For the grace of God is great enow.

52 " But me thou now wouldst fain checkmate,
That I have ill earned my penny here.
Thou say'st that I, who came so late,
Am nothing worthy a prize so dear.
But knew'st thou ever a mortal yet,
Be he ever so holy in his prayer,
That forfeited never, by some-kind gate,
Sometime, the meed of heaven clear ?
And aye the ofter, the older they were,
They leften right and wroughten woe.
Mercy and grace then must them steer,
For the grace of God is great enow.

53 " But enow of grace hath the innocent,
New born and signed with Christ's own sign
In water of the sacrament ;
Then is he brought into the Vine.
Yet soon his hour of day is spent,
Death's mighty arms the babe entwine
That wrought no wrong ere thence he went ;
Then doth the Lord each hire assign.
These took His work, they bode therein ·
Why should He not their labour allow
And pay forthwith in silver fine ?
For the grace of God is great enow.

54 " Enow 'tis known that man, complete,
Was wrought at first to bliss parfite :
This did our forefather forfeit
By that forbidden apple-bite.
All we were damnèd for that meat,
To die in dole, far from delight,
And wend forthwith to hell's fierce heat,
Therein to dwell without respite.
But Mercy came in hell's despite,
Rich blood that from the rood did flow
And water ; thus at our worst plight
The grace of God waxed great enow.

55 " Enow there waxed from out that well
Blood and water from that broad wound !
The blood us bought from bale of hell
And delivered us from death the secounde :
The water is baptism, sooth to tell,
That foiled the glaive so grimly ground,
And washeth away the guilt so fell
Wherein our father Adam was drowned.
Now is there not in the whole world round
A let to bliss or a cause of woe,
But He therefor a cure hath found :
For the grace of God is great enow.

56 " Grace enow a man may have
That sinneth anew, so he truly repent ;
But with sorrow and sighing he must it crave,
And bide such pain as thereto is bent.
Yet reason doth for ever save,
As right would have it, the innocent.
It is a doom God never gave
That ever the guiltless should be shent.
The guilty may indeed repent,
And come to grace in sin's despite ;
But who to guile did ne'er consent
In innocence is safe and right.

57 " Right thus I know well in this case
Two sorts of men shall see God's eye ;
The righteous man shall see His face,
The harmless wight shall come Him nigh :
As saith the Psalm in a certain phrase,
' Lord, who shall climb Thine hill so high
Or rest within Thine holy place ? '
Himself forthwith doth make reply :
' Servants who ne'er did harm or ill,
That are of heart both clean and light,
In God's high realm shall rest full still : '
The innocent aye is safe by right.

58 " The righteous man may be certain,
Approach he shall that proper pile,
That taketh not his life in vain
Nor glavereth his neighbour with no guile :
Of this just man saw Solomon plain,
How kindly the King on him doth smile :
To him He maketh the rough ways plain,
And showeth the Realm of God awhile,
As who saith : ' Lo ! yon lovely isle,
Thou may'st it win if thou be wight,
But scarcely yet without perile ' :
The innocent is aye safe by right.

59 " 'Twas said of one, I know well whom,
David in Psalter, that never lied :
' Lord ! draw never Thy servant to doom,
For none living to Thee is justified.'
Wherefore to court when thou shalt come,
Where all our causes shall be tried,
Think on this text ; to wrath give room ;
And leave thy fancied rights aside.
So He on rood that bloody died,
Whose hands the cruel nails did bite,
Grant thee to pass at that solemn tide
By innocence, and not by right !

60 " He who to read aright doth know
May see the Book, and there be taught
How Jesus walked, long years ago,
And folk their bairns unto Him brought ;
For hap and heal that thence did flow,
To touch their children they Him besought.
His disciples blamed to see them so,
And held them back, with grudging thought.
Then said Jesu : ' Forbid them nought,
Suffer the children come to Me tight :
For such was the heavenly kingdom bought.'
The innocent is aye safe by right.

61 " He called on His disciples mild,
And said, this realm no wight might win
But he come thither right as a child,
Or else come nevermore therein :
Harmless, true, and undefiled,
Withouten spot of soiling sin.
When such shall knock upon the bield,
Swift shall man them the gate unpin.
There is the purest bliss to win,
That the jeweller sought so early and late,
And sold all his goods, both woollen and linne,
To buy him a Pearl Immaculate.

62 " This spotless Pearl that is bought so dear,
And cost the jeweller all his good,
Is like to the heavenly kingdom clear,
(So spake the Father of fold and flood ;)
For it is wemless, clean, sincere,
And endless round, and blithe of mood,
And common to all that righteous were :
Lo ! even in midst my breast it stood.
My lord the Lamb, Who shed His blood,
This gem hath here as a peace-pledge set :
I bid thee forsake this world so rude
And purchase the Pearl Immaculate."

63 " O Spotless Pearl in pearls so pure,
That bearest," quoth I, " the Pearl of Price !
Who formèd thee thy fair figure ?
That wrought thy garment, He was full wise !
Thy beauty came never of our nature ;
Pygmalion painted not those sweet eyes,
Nor Aristotle, with all his lettrure,
Could tell no tithe of thy properties.
Thy colour passeth the fleur-de-lys,
Thy angel-bearing is so sedate,
Tell me, bright child, what troth hath its prize
In such a Pearl Immaculate ? "

64 " My Spotless Lamb on His high seat,
My dear betrothed Lord," quoth she,
" Chose me for His, howe'er unmeet.
That was the bridal-day for me
When I left your world of salt tears wet,
And came to this land of gladsome glee.
' Come hither to me, my true-love sweet,
For mote nor spot is none in thee ! '
He gave me might and great beauté,
And washed me in blood remediate,
And crowned me clean in virginté,
And decked me with pearls immaculate."

65 " O spotless maid that bright dost flame
In royal array so rich and rife !
What kind of king may be that Lamb
That thee would wed unto His wife ?
Over all others so high thou clamb,
To lead with Him so ladyly life !
So many fair maids in maidenly shame
For Christ have lived through storm and strife,
And thou, whose course was here so brief,
Hast pressed them past to so high estate,
All by thyself so stout and stiff,
A peerless maid and immaculate ! "

66 " Immaculate," quoth that mirthful queen,
" Unblemisht I am withouten blot ;
So far may I with grace maintene,
But *peerless* queen, that said I not.
The Lamb's fair wives in bliss we bene,
A hundred and forty thousand, I wot,
As in the Apocalypse it is seen :
Saint John them saw all in a knot ;
On the hill of Zion, that seemly spot,
The Apostle them saw in ghostly dream,
Arrayed to the wedding on that hill-cop
The New City of Jerusalem.

67 " Of Jerusalem here in speech I spéll.
If thou wilt know what kind He be,
My Lamb, my Lord, my dear Jewel,
My joy, my bliss, my leman free,
Of him did the prophet Esaias tell :
Piteously of his debonairté
That guiltless soul went down to hell
Withouten cause of felony.
As a sheep to the slaughter led was He,
And, as lamb before shearer is dumb and tame,
So closed He His mouth from each query,
When Jews Him judged in Jerusalem.

"In Jerusalem was my leman slain,
And rent on rood by ruffians bold;
All our bale on Him hath He ta'en,
And readily borne our cares so cold.
With buffets was His meek face flayen,
That was so fair for to behold;
For sin He set Himself in vain,
That never to sin Himself had sold.
For us bare tortures manifold,
And stretched His arms on a rugged beam;
As meek as lamb that no plaint told,
He suffered for us in Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem, Jordan, and Galilee
The baptism saw of good Saint John,
As spake Esaias, so spake he:
When Jesus was to him-ward gone,
He said of Him this prophecy:
'Lo! God's own Lamb as true as stone,
Who maketh the world from all trespass free
That every man hath thought or done.'
Himself thought not nor wrought not none,
Yet to Himself He did all claim;
His generation who reckon can,
That died for us in Jerusalem?

70 " In Jerusalem thus my leman sweet
Twice for a Lamb was taken there
By true record of each prophete,
For his mood so meek and His gentle fare.
The third time find we His title meet
In the book of Apocalypse written full fair ;
In midst of the saints on His judgment-seat
The Apostle saw Him bright and clear,
Reading the Book with leaves so square,
With seven great signets set like a hem :
And at that sight all quaked for fear,
In hell, in earth and Jerusalem.

71 " This Jerusalem Lamb had never a stain
Of aught but white, like pearl alive :
No mote nor blemish might Him attain,
Or touch His fleece so rich and rife.
This same white hue doth therefore reign
Throughout each soul that is His wife.
Though fresh souls daily join our train,
Among us cometh nor hate nor strife,
But each single one we would were five ;
The more the merrier, so God me bless !
In company great our love doth thrive,
In honour more and never the less.

72 " Less of bliss may none us bring,
That bear this pearl upon our breast ;
For we who touched no sinful thing
Wear here of spotless pearls the crest :
Although our corses in clods must cling,
While ye cry for ruth withouten rest,
We see and know our heavenly King,
In His one death our hope is drest :
Our care is cast upon His breast,
He feasteth us with His fulness,
The bliss of each is fairest and best,
And never one's honour is any the less.

73 " Lest thou deem my tale but empty sound,
Hear now St. John's revealèd lore :
I saw the Lamb that Satan bound
Stand on the Mount as conqueror,
With virgins a hundred thousand around,
And four and forty thousand more :
On all their foreheads written I found
The Lamb's high name, that His father bore.
A voice I heard like to the roar
Of waters weltering numberless,
Or thunder thrown on some pale tower :
That voice methinks did sound no less.

74 " Loud as that trumpet-voice did blaze,
And thunderous as its echoes were,
A note full new I heard them raise ;
Joyful and pleasant it was to hear.
As harpers harp to their own lays,
So sang they that new song full clear :
One maiden led those notes of praise,
And the rest in choir did follow her.
Right before the Lord's high chair,
And the four Beasts that Him confess
And the Elder-men so staid of cheer,
Their song they sungen never the less.

75 " Natheless was no man never so wise,
For all the crafts that ever he knew,
To sing one point of that service,
Save those sweet choirs the Lamb that sue.
For they have been sundered from earthly vice
As first fruits to the Saviour due.
To Him they are joined in Paradise,
Like to Himself in look and hue :
For never leasing nor tale untrue
Touched their pure tongue for no distress :
That spotless meinie may never remue
From that stainless Master never the less."

76 " Never the less I give thee thank,
Dear Pearl, though I question thee so close,
I should not tempt thy wit so frank,
Who art to Christ's own chamber y-chose
I am but muck and ordure rank,
And thou so rich and royal a rose,
And bidest here by this blissful bank
Where life may never her sweetness lose!
Dear heart, that wast once of so simple compose,
I would thee ask a thing express:
Churlish am I and uncouth to glose,
Let my prayer avail me never the less.

77 " Nevertheless on thee I call,
If thou see that it may be done,
As thou art glorious withouten gall,
Gainsay thou never my rueful boon.
Have ye no dwelling in castle wall
Nor manor where ye may meet at one?
Thou speak'st of Jerusalem rich, royal,
Where David dear was dight on throne,
But it may not be in this forest lone:
In Judea is that fair city, God wot!
As ye are stainless under the moon,
Your dwelling should be withouten spot.

78 "This spotless choir, sweet damozel,
Thousands throng in this great rout:
Since then ye are so many to tell,
Great must be your city, methought.
So many a rich and rare jewel,
'Twere parlous to let them lie without;
Yet see I no strong citadel,
Though all these banks I spy about.
In one place ye dwell, beyond all doubt,
To gaze on His glory Whom God begot;
If thou hast another castle stout,
Now teach me the way to that merry spot."

79 "That spot in Jewry," said then my Gem,
"Whereof thy tongue so lately spake,
That is the city whereto the Lamb
Did go to suffer for man's sad sake;
To wit, the Old Jerusalem
Where the old guilt was done to slake.
But the New, that straight from God down came,
The Apostle John for his theme did take.
The Lamb there, clean from blemish black,
Hath ferried hither this fair float;
And, as His flock is withouten fleck,
So is His dwelling free from spot.

80 " Of these two spots the truth now glean :
Jerusalem hight each of these,
Which name ywis no more doth mean
Than ' City of God,' or ' Sight of Peace.'
In the first, deep peace was made between
Mankind and God, through the Lamb's decease.
In that other is none but peace to glean
That aye shall last without release.
That is the bourn whereto we press,
Whenas our flesh is laid to rot ;
There glory and bliss shall ever increase
To the meinie that is withouten spot."

81 " Spotless maiden so meek and mild,"
Then said I to that lovely Flower,
" Bring me but once to that noble bield,
And let me see thy blissful bower."
" Sir," said she whom God shall shield,
" Thou may'st not enter within His tower ;
But the Holy Lamb to thee will yield
A sight thereof, through great favour.
Without, thou shalt see that clean cloistour
But *inward* seest thou never a jot.
To stretch in that street thou hast no vigour,
But if thou wert clean withouten spot.

82 " If I that spot shall now un-hide,
Bend upward to this streamlet's head,
And I against thee on this side,
Until thou see a broad hill spread."
Then would I no longer bide,
But stole through many a flowery mead ;
Till, from a hill that I espied,
I saw its dazzling radiance shed.
Beyond the swirling river-bed
It shone more radiant than the sun :
In Apocalypse is its fashion said
As deviseth it the Apostle John.

83 Even as it met the Apostle's sight,
Saw I that city of great renown,
The New Jerusalem, royally dight
As it was let from heaven adown.
Its bulwarks burned with gold so bright,
As burnished glass that gleams around,
With noble gems all underpight,
And pillars twelve on their bases bound :
On twelve great slabs the Lord did found
Those walls, and each a precious stone ;
As standeth written of this fair town
In Apocalypse of the Apostle John.

84 As John the stones in writ did name,
Knew I their name now by his tale.
Jasper hight the foremost gem,
For first foundation, nothing frail,
Gleaming green in the lowest hem :
Secondly, sapphire did I hail :
Chalcedony then withouten wem
In the third course shone pure and pale :
Emerald the fourth, so green of scale,
And fifth came sweet sardonyx stone :
The sixth was ruby, after the tale
Of Apocalypse by the Apostle John.

85 To these joined John the chrysolite
As seventh gem in fundament :
The eighth, the beryl clear and white :
Next, twin-hued topaz excellent :
Chrysoprase the tenth stone hight :
The eleventh, jacynth rich and quaint :
The twelfth, that burned with mellowest light,
Was amethyst purple with azure blent.
The walls, that on this basement leant,
Were jasper clear as glass that shone :
I knew it by the devisément
In Apocalypse of the Apostle John.

86 As John devised, so saw I there ;
These twelve degrees were steep and wide ;
The city stood above foursquare,
And foursquare was each several side ;
Through streets of gold so glassy clear
The jasper walls arose in pride :
Within, the dwellings garnished were
With stones that earthly gems outvied.
Twelve furlong space I well descried
The measure of this heavenly town ;
As high as long, as long as wide,
By the measure of the Apostle John.

87 As wrote the Apostle, so saw we
Three lofty portals every way ;
Twelve gates, adorned in symmetry
With fretted gold in rich array ;
Each gate a single marjorie,
A pearl too perfect for decay ;
Each doth a name, writ fair to see,
Of Israel's twelve tribes, display :
Each tribe in order, that is to say
The eldest first, was writ thereon :
These streets shone with so fair a ray,
They needed neither sun nor moon.

88 Of sun nor moon they had no need,
The self God was their lamp and light ;
The Lamb their lantern was in deed,
By Him the borough glistened bright.
Through wall and roof my eye could read,
That were transparent to the sight ;
The throne aloft there might ye heed,
With all the adornments round bedight
Whereof the Apostle John did write ;
The High God's self sat thereupon,
A river ran from that throne outright,
Was brighter than both sun and moon.

89 Sun nor moon shone never so sweet
As the flood that flowed from that throne so fair ;
Swiftly it swirled through every street
Its stainless waves of crystal clear :
Kirk was none in that high seat,
Nor chapel nor temple whatsoe'er ;
The Almighty was their minster meet,
The Lamb their redeeming sacrifice there.
The portals never closèd were,
But ever open, late and soon ;
There entereth none, I durst well swear
That beareth any spot under moon.

90 The moon hath there no sheen nor might,
Too spotted she is, of body too grim ;
And also there is never night,
What needeth the moon her course to climb,
And to even herself with that noble light
That shineth upon the river's brim ?
The planets are in too poor a plight,
And the sun himself is all too dim.
Round that river are trees of every clime,
That bear twelve fruits of life full soon ;
Twelve times a year is their blossom at prime,
And their fruit reneweth at every moon.

91 Anunder moon so great mervail
No fleshy heart might e'er endure
As this which did my sight assail,
So wondrous bright in portraiture :
I stood as still as dazèd quail,
For marvel of that fair figure,
Unapt to rest as to travail
For ravishment of that gleam so pure :
For I dare say, with conscience sure,
Had mortal man abidden that boon,
Though all wise clerks had him in cure,
His life were lost anunder moon.

92 Right as the mighty moon doth rise
Ere thence the day-gleam driveth down,
So suddenly, in so wondrous wise,
I was aware of a procession :
This noble city of rich emprise
Was suddenly full, without summon,
Of virgins, all in that same guise
As was my blest one 'neath her crown :
And crowned were all in the same fashion,
Arrayed in pearls and weeds of white ;
On each one's breast was firmly bound
That blissful pearl of great delight.

93 With great delight they glided fair
On golden ways that glent like glass ;
Hundred thousands I wot there were,
And all in suit their livery was.
'Twas hard to choose the gladdest there :
The Lamb before did proudly pass
With seven horns of red gold clear ;
As precious pearls his garment was.
Toward the throne they gently pace
In crowds, yet orderly to the sight,
And mild as modest maids at Mass ;
So drave they forth with great delight.

94 The glad delight of His appear,
Too much it were for me to tell ;
To these Elder-men when He came near,
Grovelling at His feet they fell ;
Legions of angels gathered there,
Scattering their incense of sweet smell ;
And all was glory and gladsome cheer,
And all sang love to that gay Jewel.
The strain might strike through earth and Hell
That these heavenly Powers in their joy endite ;
For love of the Lamb this praise doth swell,
In sooth I caught a great delight.

95 Delight, as I strove this Lamb to devise,
Hand in hand with marvel went ;
Best was He, blithest and most to prize,
That ever I heard in discourse spent ;
So snowy white was His outward guise,
His looks so simple, Himself so gent ;
But a wide wet wound in wondrous wise,
Right to His heart full red was rent,
From His white side the blood out-sprent ;
" Alas ! " thought I, " who did that spite ? "
Any breast for bale might well have brent,
Ere he thereto had had delight.

96 Yet His delight none doubted then,
Though He were hurt and such wound had ;
For nought was in His semblant seen,
So glorious were His looks and glad.
I looked among His train so sheen,
How bright they were, and nothing sad :
Then spied I there my little Queen
Whom last I saw within the glade :
Lord ! merry was the mirth she made,
Among her fellows that were so white.
It drove me through that stream to wade
For love-longing and great delight.

97 Delight drove through me, eye and ear,
Melted to madding my manly mood ;
When I saw my dear, I would fain be there,
Though she were held beyond that flood :
No thing, methought, might give me fear,
Though every hindrance me withstood ;
Start I but once to cross this mere,
I will swim the rest, though it cost my blood !
But sudden fell this rebel mood
That stirred me to start in the stream astray
And humbler, calmer thoughts ensued :
It was not to my Prince's pay.

98 It payed Him not that I should dare
Those swirling waters to invade
In headlong rage or dark despair :
Swiftly therefrom was I restayed ;
For, as I stood all ready there,
At that wild thought my dream did fade.
Then wakened I in that Arbour fair,
My head upon that Mound was laid
Where my sweet Pearl to ground had strayed :
I roused me, and fell in great affray :
And, sighing, to myself I said,
" Now all be to that Prince's pay ! "

99 Me payed full ill to be cast forth
So suddenly from that fair region,
From all those sights of joy and mirth :
A heavy longing struck me in swoon,
And heavily came my words to birth :
" O Pearl," quoth I, " of rich renown,
'Tis my sole solace here on earth
That thou hast brought me this vision.
If it be true that thou, mine own,
Farest for ever in garlands gay,
Then well is me in this dim dungeon
That thou art to this Prince's pay."

100 To that Prince's pay I aye had bent,
Nor yearned for more than me was given ;
I held me there in true intent
At bidding of my dear Pearl in heaven ;
Had grace me drawn to Goddës presente,
To more of His mysteries had I been driven ;
But aye would man more good hap hent
Than should by right upon him cleaven :
Therefore my joy too soon was riven,
And I cast forth from the Realms of Day.
Lord, mad are they that against Thee striven,
Or pray Thee for ought against Thy pay.

101 The Prince's yoke is ever light
To those who love His peace divine,
For I have found Him, both day and night,
A God, a Lord, a Friend full fine.
Thus mused I, stretched on earth outright,
Plaining my Pearl with bitter brine,
Committing to God that Jewel bright
In Christës dear blessing and mine,
That in the form of bread and wine
The priest us showeth every day.
Lord, make us servants true of Thine
And precious pearls unto Thy pay !

NOTES

NOTES

1. **Pay:** pleasure; "apayed" is very common in Chaucer for 'pleased."

4. **High Season:** i.e. one of the great Church festivals. The chief festivals in August were those of the Transfiguration (6th), the Name of Jesus (7th), and the Assumption of the B.V.M. (15th).

5. **Gromelion** is the modern "gromwell" or "graymill" (Lat. *lithospermum*).

7. **A gravel, etc.:** Dr. Carleton Brown points out that we have here a probable reminiscence of Sir John Mandeville (chap. xxx. p. 180; ed. Macmillan, 1900). "A three journeys long from that sea be great mountains, out of the which goeth a great flood that cometh out of Paradise. And it is full of precious stones, without any drop of water, and it runneth through the desert on that one side, so that it maketh the sea gravelly; and it beareth into that sea, and there it endeth."

St. 14. **So shone she, etc.:** Cf. Dante, *Purg.* xxix, 1st and following verses.

St. 16. **Piece:** thing or person.

St. 23. **O sir, etc.:** Cf. *Purg.* xxx. 127, and following.

St. 25. The irregular use of "ye" and "thee" in this stanza follows the original.

St. 28. **Gar me greet:** make me weep. Both words are still used in Scotland.

St. 30. **Swithe:** quickly; **lithe:** soothe.

St. 31. **Deemed:** here not thought, but spoke; cf. the similar double use of *meinen* in German. **Remorde:** stung with remorse.

St. 33. **Tent:** care, attention.

St. 39. **Tryste:** trustily.

St. 41. The sense of **date**, in this and the following stanzas, is end, goal, and aim.

St. 42. **Tight:** of course close; it is the German *dicht*.

St. 43. **Wrythe:** struggle.

St. 45. **Brown:** frequently means merely "dark" in older English, as in French and Italian. Cf. Dante, *Inf.* ii. 1 — "Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aer bruno Toglieva gli animai, che sono in terra, Dalle fatiche loro. . . ."

St. 46. **Repreny:** reprehend; **atteny:** attain; **pleny:** complain; **streny:** strain.

St. 50. **Preterminable:** prescient, able to determine beforehand.

St. 54. **Parfite:** perfect.

St. 58. **Glavereth:** cheats.

St. 61. **Bield:** gate; **linne:** line

Sts. 65, 66. It is impossible for t translator to render here t play upon the words "makeles (peerless) and "maskeles" (i maculate).

St. 75. **Remue:** remove, mo away.

St. 78. **Parlous:** perilous.

St. 84. "The best jasper," writ Vincent of Beauvais, "is eith green as an emerald, only le transparent, or else green wi blood-red spots" (*Speculu Naturale*, lib. viii. c. 77).

St. 100. **Hent:** catch, gain.